

December: Safe Toys & Gifts Month

With the holiday season approaching, your thoughts may be turning to shopping for toys and gifts. You'll want to get the children in your life their favorite toys, and there are thousands of toys to choose from in stores and online.

Before you make those purchases remember to consider the safety and age-range of the toys. In 2007 alone, toymakers recalled over 19 million toys worldwide because of safety concerns such as lead paint and small magnets. In 2005, there were over 200,000 toy-related injuries.

To prevent injuries, choose toys that are safe for the age of the child. Look for labels to help you judge which toys might not be safe, especially for infants and children under age three. For children of all ages, consider if the toys are suited to their skills and abilities.

- To learn more about toy safety, visit www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/toy_sfy.html.
- For toy safety shopping tips, visit www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/grand/toy/toysafe.html.

Sources: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

Focus On: Selecting Safe Toys

Even within the child's age range, toys suitable for one child might not be suitable for another child. It's good to keep in mind that younger children, if they're not being watched closely, may play with toys purchased for older children. Here are some guidelines for choosing safe toys for all ages:

- Look for toys that have a solid design and a sturdy construction—toys that won't break, crush, or be pulled apart easily.
- Check to see if the instructions are clear.
- Read the labels to see if there are any fire hazards.
- Look for labels that assure you the toys have passed a safety inspection—ASTM means the toy has met the American Society for Testing and Materials standards.



Choosing Toys for Children with Special Needs

Here are some tips for buying quality toys for children with special needs:

- Choose toys that may appeal to different senses—sound, movement, texture.
- Consider interactive toys—toys that allow the child to play with others.
- Think about what size the toy is and what position a child would need to be in to play with it.

Determine if the toy could be adapted to different kinds of play in different situations—could it be played with alone or in interaction with other children? Could the toy be adjusted for a child with special needs? Could it be used with other toys?

AblePlay™, a service of the National Lekotek Center, offers a database for parents, friends, and relatives to search for toys for children with special needs.

Sources: National Lekotek Center

Along with knowing what kinds of toys to choose, it's important to know what kinds of toys to avoid in order to prevent possible injuries. For example, do not choose:

- Toys with small parts and sharp edges and points.
- Guns and other toys that shoot flying objects and make loud noises.
- Crayons and markers that are not labeled nontoxic.
- Toys that could shatter into fragments if broken.
- Toys with ropes and cords.
- Electric toys with heating elements.

For toy safety shopping tips, visit

www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/grand/toy/toysafe.html.

To learn more about choosing safe toys for children of different ages, visit www.preventblindness.org/children/safetoys.html.

Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics, National Network for Child Care, Nemours Foundation, Prevent Blindness America, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

Prevention Tips: Keeping Kids Safe from Lead in Toys

Toys imported from other countries and older toys may have high levels of lead in the paint or in the plastic. Because of normal hand-to-mouth activity, children can expose themselves to lead paint or dust. Even small amounts of lead can be harmful to your child. It's hard to know exactly what toys might be dangerous, but here are a few tips to help you protect your kids from lead exposure from toys:

- Educate yourself about lead exposure from toys.
- Have your children wash their hands frequently.
- Before shopping, look to see what kinds of toys have been recalled.
- Be aware that old toys may contain lead in the paint.

Call your health care provider if you suspect that your child has been exposed to lead. Most children have no symptoms, but some children may be irritable, show aggressive behavior, have little appetite or energy, or complain of headaches. Children exposed to a high dose of lead may have abdominal pain and cramps.

- For toy hazard recalls, visit the Consumer Product Safety Commission's page at www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/category/toy.html.
- Recalled toys containing lead or magnets that might be swallowed are listed at www.cpsc.gov/recentrecalls.html.
- For information on toys and childhood lead exposure, visit www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/faq/toys.htm.
- More information about lead poisoning and its symptoms can be found at www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002473.htm.

Sources: Food and Drug Administration, National Center for Environmental Health, CDC; National Library of Medicine, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

National Health Observances—
December 2007

Safe Toys and Gifts Month
www.preventblindness.org/children/safetoys.html

For a comprehensive list of 2007 National Health Observances, visit:
www.healthfinder.gov/library/nho.

Resources

Age-Appropriate Toys
www.medem.com/medlb/article_detailb.cfm?article_ID=ZZZ9VGSOQ7C&sub_cat=104

Choosing Safe Toys
www.kidshealth.org/parent/growth/learning/safe_toys.html

For Kids' Sake: Think Toy Safety
www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/281.html

Safe Toy Checklist
www.preventblindness.org/children/safetoys.html

Top 10 Tips for Choosing Toys
www.lekotek.org/resources/informationontoystentips.html

Toy Safety Publications
www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/toy_sfy.html

Toy Safety Shopping Tips
www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/grand/toy/toysafe.html